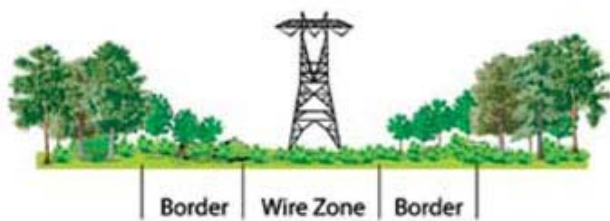


PPL Rights-of-way as Bird Habitat



Golden-winged Warbler. Photo ©Laurie Smaglick Johnson

To ensure compliance with federal electric reliability standards, many utilities like PPL Electric Utilities are clearing the areas under high-voltage power lines along utility rights-of-way (referred to as the “wire zones”). The area bordering the wire zone extending to the edge of the utility rights-of-way (called the “border zone”) can have low-growing plant species that are consistent with the utility’s program to comply with the federal requirements. Such plant species also can provide critical habitat to birds and other wildlife.



Scrub-Shrub Habitat

When an old field is left unmanaged, woody shrubs become established, which eventually give way to small trees and, ultimately, forest. Scrub-shrub or “successional” habitat refers to the middle time period when shrubs and small trees dominate. A host of bird species, including ruffed grouse, brown thrasher, eastern towhee, field sparrow, and golden-winged warbler, are dependent on these transitional habitats.

Planting and Managing Scrub-Shrub Habitat

Typically scrub-shrub habitat is only a temporary condition before conversion to forest. In areas near power lines, however, it is necessary to keep vegetation height low in perpetuity. This can be accomplished by planting compatible species and selectively removing saplings of large trees. Removing invasive plants like multiflora rose and honeysuckle will allow native shrubs (see compatible list below), which provide nutritious berries and seeds, to flourish. Habitat that includes a variety of species and heights will produce the best habitat for many bird species, so selective removal of individuals from areas where one species dominates may be considered.



Scrub-shrub habitat at forest edge. Photo ©Laurie Smaglick Johnson

Compatible Plant Species

The following list of native plants are appropriate for planting in Border Zones and provide cover and food to desirable birds and native plants noted above.

Small trees

Flowering dogwood
Redbud
Hawthorn
American Hornbeam
Serviceberry
Eastern Red Cedar
American Chestnut
Dwarf Willow
Winterberry Holly

Small shrubs

Mountain laurel
American Yew
Sweetfern
Trumpet Honeysuckle
Huckleberries
Blueberries
Viburnums
Meadowsweet (Spirea)
Wintergreen
Trailing Arbutus
Blackberry (Allegheny)
Raspberry
Hazelnut
Scrub Oak species

Large shrubs

Alder
Witch-hazel
Spicebush
Common Chokecherry
Elderberry
Rhododendron
Viburnum
Dogwood
Sumac species
Chokeberry

All native grasses, ferns,
herbaceous plants

For more information, go to <http://pa.audubon.org/habitat>